An Essay
On the
Origin and Philosophy of disease

Respectfully Submitted
To the
Homoeopathic Medical College
of Pennsylvania

On the twelfth day of February
One Thousand Eight Hundred and Fifty.

For the
Doctorate in Medicine
by
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The origin and Philosophy of Disease.

Many theories of the origin of disease are current in the Allopathic Schools of Medicine, none of which however are of sufficient importance to merit our consideration. Hahnemann teaches # "that in the cure of disease it is necessary to regard its fundamental cause"; while in a subsequent note he implies that a knowledge of the final cause of disease were quite useless. And while Homoeopathy has explored the dynamic action of medicines far down to the very penetralia of life, the theory of the origin of disease as proposed by its illustrious founder, still requires to be completed and thus finally and fully confirmed. Pursueing our own inquiries in an independent manner, let us attempt to reconcile this apparent inconsistency, and to supply this desideratum;

Organon, N.Y. 1848, p. 96 - § 14 -

The original condition of man was one of perfect health. Both observation and experience shew that this normal state now no longer exists. To convey a full and just idea of the universal prevalence of disease would require a physical history of man from the earliest ages. And tho' in the beginning the human race was placed on an equality with the inferior orders of creation, how marked, how melancholy the contrast which now presents. The brutes are born, grow up to maturity, replenish their race in turn, and pass away, with an order as little interrupted in general, as that of the plant which arises in the Spring from its peculiar seed, blossoms & at its proper time, ~~and~~ fructifies at its full time and decays, leaving its seed also in the soil in anticipation of the returning Spring. While man comes into the world with pains and tears, is beset in each stage of his existence with peculi-

or forms of disease, which constantly threaten his life and finally and often prematurely terminate it. And let us trace the natural history of our race as far back as we will, we still fail to reach any era from which we can date a degeneration purely physical which shall account for the painful fact that, man originally created but little lower than the angels, has become in point of health, far inferior to the lower orders of creation. While yet the application of the origin of disease, involving as it necessarily must, its philosophy also, becomes one of the most interesting and important problems, whether we regard its scientific interest or its practical bearing.

The cause of disease vital, not physical.

As already intimated, the natural history of man affords no clue to any physical or external cause of the introduction of

Disease into the originally healthy body. Reasoning a priori, we should conclude that there could not be such a cause. For it is certain that neither disease nor the predisposition to it could have been originated either by telluric, mundane or magnetic influences (~~of climate or otherwise~~). Had it been otherwise how could the inferior animals, equally if not still more exposed to the same influences, have remained unaffected by them? Nor could such radical change in the human system have resulted ~~from~~ from change of climate: for the constitution of man is endowed with a most wonderful power of adaptation, is even now enabled to accommodate itself without essential injury to almost any variety of temperature, and in its normal state must have possessed this power in a still more remarkable degree. Nor do we find recorded any positive evidence going to sustain such a supposition. Nor again can we determine

any the most unhealthy habits of living and customs of Society to be the original cause of disease. For while ~~No such custom~~ none of them have ever exerted an influence co-extensive with the spread of disease, we find evidences of disease farther back than we can trace the influence of any such customs. We are compelled to conclude, therefore, that no purely physical cause could have been the occasion of the introduction of disease.

In all cases, it is believed that the human system is either actually disordered, or possessed with some predisposition to disease or "Latent Disease", as Hahnemann terms it. How upon any other supposition can we account for the origin and extension of Epidemics? The doctrine of the Spontaneous generation of Animalculi, had at one time numerous advocates among the learned; but at the present day no philosopher would risk his reputation for sanity by def-

Ending a dogma now so universally regarded as absurd. Neither would the Student of Medical Science affirm, because he could not discover the external, material or physical ~~f~~ cause which led an epidemic to attack one person in perfect health and ~~pass~~ + pass by another in the same situation and equally exposed, that the disease itself was spontaneous. Still less would he assert that such things were the result of "Blind Chance". The cause of disease, since it cannot be physical, lies from then back than the purely physical economy, than chemical, telluric or magnetic influences — it is and must be vital — must originate in an affection of the principle of life itself. And as in health the human system is animated by the vital principle, which at once vivifies the material organism and manifests its normal condition through it; — so in disease the same vital principle indeed sustains the bodily system, but manifests its disordered action through its functions and form.

+ pass

Here then we are arrested in the midst of our course and compelled to inquire what is this vital principle - Nor do we inquire alone. The Anatomist has searched for it in vain; he has severed muscle from muscle and limb from limb, he has scrutinized with the most indefatigable industry every gland and organ, every part and parcel of the frame of man, - but nowhere has he been able to detect the principle of life. The Pathologist has studied the effect of the gradual and sudden disease and decay of the organic tissues, watched patiently the last flickering of the vital spark as it dwindled and flared fitfully with expiring energy and passed away in darkness, and searched the still warm remains to discover what that was, which, being changed, constituted Death. But in all his painful researches the vital principle has eluded his most cunning eye in declining life, nor yet has he succeeded in arresting the

Sacred mystery from Death itself. The Physiologist has made himself profoundly master of the organic, vital processes. He has studied both separately and in combination all the functions of life itself; has questioned every nerve, weighed in the balances every inspiration and pulsation; and finally, as if in despair of discovering the "Origin of Life" in the physical economy, has sought for it in the connection of Mind and Matter. With some vague idea he turns indeed in the right direction, but fails to begin in the right place, or to penetrate to a sufficient depth. Thus he ends at last with the Histologist, who having traced the origin and growth of organic tissue to a molecular minuteness exactly corresponding to the atomic theory of inorganic matter, stops, because he can go no deeper, and there seeks to blend Matter with Mind. And as the chemist would derive the heat of the body

from the union of oxygen and carbon, & from the contact of Mind with its material form, does he seek to elicit the principle of life. An idea which is perhaps as beautiful in theory as it is impossible in fact. For Mind may indeed be brought down to blend with Matter, that is to flow into it, but never can ought material be thus raised into contact with the attributes of Mind. Nor yet does the Mind, either separately or as flowing into the body, constitute the vital principle. Had man then on a ~~level~~ level with the beasts, we should be absolutely at a loss. But he is not; he has above the Mind (which is itself almost ~~inferior to~~ infinitely superior to theirs) a higher element, a nobler being, a spiritual nature. And it is this spiritual nature, which flowing first into the Mind thence into the body, constitutes the all-pervading vital principle, being the

very life itself and essential man. Such is the vital principle, which not all the students of physical science could ever discover, either by searching into or up through the organic tissues of its fleshy tabernacle. And finally, it is to this spiritual nature as the vital principle, we must refer for the final cause and ever constant source of all the disorder which affects the whole man. For the spirit exerts in the same order its abnormal as its normal influences, - transmitting the mischief originating in its own moral nature into and through the intellect to its final and fullest manifestation in the body which constitutes its material exponent and form.

Spiritual Disorder the Final Cause of Disease.

We have seen that the original cause of disease can be neither external, physical, nor material; - that it can be found only in the affection of the vital principle.

The hand seen also that the Spirit, the Moral Nature constitutes this vital principle, and is not only the very life of the man but is the very man himself. And as the normal state of the Moral Nature was the primary and essential condition of the healthy state of the body, as its material form, so the abnormal, disordered condition of the Moral being becomes the original and final cause of the introduction of disease into the body. Not that the body may not have suffered even in its normal condition from the accidental transgression of its physical laws, such as wounds and bruises from actual violence and injuries from heat or cold: but, as shewn above, by no such ~~means~~ influences could the constitution of the whole human race have been changed from ~~a~~ perfect health to a state of latent or apparent disease.

The only disorder possible to a Moral Nature originally created pure, is a Moral one. And without

referring to any authority higher than that of our own intelligent reason, and are able to perceive ~~that~~ since man must have come from his Creator's hands pure and perfect, and is now in a state quite opposite to this, that he must have changed in this respect. This preference of evil instead of good is the most serious if not the only disorder which could befall a pure Spiritual Nature, whether embodied in a human form or not. It remains therefore only to state in a formal manner the conclusion which inevitably flows from these premises. This disorder of the Spiritual, moral being, which we have found to be the final cause of discord, is <u>Sin</u>, or the substitution of the love of Self for the love of God and the neighbor. In the beginning God created man upright, as well physically as spiritually. And it is this perversion of good, this choice of evil which

has sufficed to introduce disorder and sin, disease and death into the whole man, from the highest affections of the immortal will into and through the intellect, the forma mentis eterna, down to the visible bodily form.

This conclusion may seem ultra, it is certainly startling. But we have approached it step by step, through a long and patient induction. Let us reverse the order and return from the highest point which we have just attained and the doctrine we seek to elucidate will more clearly appear. ~~As just now intimated~~, man derives his life not from himself, but from the Lord, from whom his constant influx is as essential to his continuance in life as ~~the~~ its first inspiration was this original creation. This life from the Lord, consisting of divine Love and divine Wisdom flows respectively into the spirit or moral nature, and into the intellect or understanding, from thence into the body.

Pure in its first influx as the Divine Fountain from whence it originates, this Love and Wisdom while by connecting man with the Lord it sustains his life, is perverted in its reception from Good and Truth to Evil and False. It is thus that disorder is introduced at once into the Spirit or Will and the Intellect or understanding from whence the body which is but the form of the Mind as the Mind is the form of the Spirit becomes immediately and constitutionally ~~as~~ diseased.

These views of this subject to which we are led by enlightened reason, are confirmed by Revelation. "Sin brought death into the world and all our woes." An affirmation so positive and comprehensive must be understood to include physical as well as spiritual disease and death.

Disease a Direct Result of Evil.

Although owing to the disordered condition of the human constitution and the latent predisposition to disease which exists in those who appear most healthy, we have less opportunity to observe the original action of morbific causes; we are still permitted to see how in many cases evil produces the most varied, violent and dangerous forms of disease. The sudden and furious emotions of anger and hatred often produce severe functional disturbance of the stomach, liver and spleen as well as congestions and even absolute stoppage of the circulation. But no illustration of the direct influence of wickedness in the production of bodily disorders can exceed those presented by the excessive indulgence of the sensual passions, which speedily develops the most awful and incurable diseases. It would be easy to enlarge under this head; but numerous examples, illustrative of the direct

influence of disordered moral action in developing a corresponding disorder in the body, will present themselves to the reader's mind.

The Inconsistency Explained.

In quoting Hahnemann's doctrine of the necessity of regarding "the fundamental cause of disease", we remarked the apparent inconsistency with which he afterwards seems to dissuade from all investigation of its final cause. A similar discrepancy presents in his statement of "Psora" as the cause of disease and his doctrine of "the disturbance of the spirito-vital principle, in disease, by the dynamic influence of a morbific agent inimical to life, which however can only affect it in a spiritual manner." Such inconsistencies are not uncommon in the works of those most profoundly learned; and sometimes where we can neither explain nor understand our authors, it seems even doubtful if they understood themselves. ~~to~~

But happily in this case we are not thus at fault. We cannot but feel while perusing what Hahnemann has left us on this subject that he had some idea more ~~more~~ profound than he had clear conceptions. He seemed to catch occasional glimpses of a master truth which still hovered just beyond the confines of his farthest vision. He had demonstrated that "Psora" was in all probability ~~the~~ not only the primary disease of the human body, but that it was also the immediate source of all others. This position he gained by a process of inductive reasoning which extended from the earliest medical records to his own day. At the same time he seems to have been clearly conscious that disorder of the Spirito-vital principle was also the cause of all disease. But however clear might have been his views in other respects, he has nowhere taught what is now almost self-evident, that this Spirito-vital principle is the will, the moral nature, the very soul itself, as

distinct from the intellect or understanding as this is from the body. And thus therefore this disorder of the vital principle must be moral evil.

But while we find it necessary at the present day, to take a step in advance of Hahnemann's teachings, ~~the~~ let us neither forget to be truly thankful that we can do so, nor our vast obligations to Hahnemann himself, for what he has done. Let us beware how we suffer a thought of disrespect to enter our minds towards the noble founder of Homœopathy, for not having done what no finite ~~one~~ being could have done, by eliminating a perfect system from its first and highest principles to its ultimates. Let us reverence the sublime old man; And remember if we are permitted to see clearly a most important truth, which was perhaps but partially hidden from him, that it is due not to our own superior discernment, but to the age of greater light in which we are placed. Now forget that had we not been enlightened

by Hahnemann's discoveries we could have improved neither his principles nor his practice. And even if we do not adopt Dr. Helmuth's ingenious interpretation of the term "Psora", to be a name for "the principle of division or dissolution which man has suffered to be introduced into his spiritual nature and which must necessarily have embodied itself in a corresponding ~~form~~ principle in the material organism" — we may still have reason to believe that a uniform cutaneous eruption, ~~was~~ like that called "Psora", was the first sensible manifestation of disease, as well as that this eruption might have been (what is but expressing the same thing in different words) the natural result of disturbance of the vital principle. There is, running through the various departments of nature, a principle of transfer, which seems capable of illustrating the mode of the progression of moral evil from its first origin in the will or affections, to its final and visible manifestation upon the skin — as in Mechanics, the first of a suspended series of ~~ball~~

Elastic balls being struck transmits the Motive force communicated to it through all the intermediate ones, which remain comparatively quiet, to the last, which flies off in an opposite direction; — And as in Galvanic Chemistry, Each atom of the hydrogen liberated by the decomposition of water in the rapid oxydization of Zinc, seizes upon and decomposes its next-neighbor atom of water, which in turn transmits its free atom of hydrogen to the next particle of water — and so on from atom to atom through the whole mass, till the last atom of hydrogen ~~seeks~~ from the last atom of water, reaches the strong Nitric acid; — And as in Pathology, the pregnant female is usually kept clear of disease by its passing into the foetus in utero, and after parturition, into the Milk; — And as in all cases of acute or chronic disease the system struggles to relieve its internal and more vital functions by throwing out the disorder upon the skin, —

So it is it not possible that, Disease, originating as we have already seen it must, in the Moral Nature as the Spirit-vital principle, being transmitted in a similar manner, into and through the Mind, and from thence into the interiors of the body — may be there manifested upon the External Surface in the form of an Eruption which shall present a uniform appearance exactly corresponding to the uniformity of the original Spiritual disorder? We know that in the strongest and most vigorous systems such relief is most readily obtained in sickness. Thus the apparent inconsistency in Hahnemann's doctrine of the origin of disease, may arise from the greater stress which he lays upon what he considers the immediate cause of disease, from thinking it more useful to do so; — and on the other hand, from the briefer and more indefinite manner in which he alludes to what must be considered the final

cause of disease with which he deemed it vain to meddle. In the same manner while he earnestly enjoins the investigation of "the fundamental cause of disease" he dissuades from inquiring "how the vital principle produces disease" — or — as he would generally be understood, from endeavoring to discover the mode and final cause of the origin of disease; a question which he considers baffles the physician and which must therefore forever remain unanswered. Just as Socrates reproaches the the Sophists of his time, with neglecting those studies which more immediately concerned the welfare of mankind, to waste their time in trying to discover "how the worlds were made and how all things existed". Hahnemann, perhaps, had as much reason for his corresponding injunctions for the German Philosophers no less than the Athenians, were too much inclined to the pursuit of speculations

as profound as they were healers. Perhaps to it might have been as well for some Modern Authors# of Mind fol of the Wisdom of the Athenian, they had not undertaken to show not only how the worlds were made and sustained, but how they made and sustained themselves! But to return, it will appear from the preceding discussion, that in order to reach the final cause of disease it is not necessary to ascertain <u>how it acts</u>. Thus the letter of Hahnemann's injunction remains unbroken, tho we may have gone beyond its spirit.

And, in conclusion, it must be evident, if these views are found, that a knowledge of the origin and philosophy of disease must be of the utmost importance not only to every physician in healing the sick, - but to every man in restoring and preserving the integrity of his own system.

See "Vestiges of Creation" passim.

An Essay
On the Use of the Obstetrical Forceps.
Presented,
To the Faculty
of the
Homœopathic Medical
College
of Pennsylvania
in Philadelphia
For the degree of Doctrate in Medicine
by Richard Gardiner
of Philadelphia
February 1. 1850.